

File No. 51

I SAMUEL 2:12 – 3:18

GOD CALLS SAMUEL

(SBS Bk 2 Story No. 24)

Story Notes

While young Samuel grew up and served God with all the heritage of his godly parents, Eli's sons, Hophni and Phineas raged out of control, doing as they wished with the people's offerings and the female helpers. Eli spoke to them but would not restrain them. He honoured his sons more than God and shared in their sin through inaction. The family had become self indulgent, effectively forsaking God (Deut. 32:15). God had promised the priesthood to Aaron and his sons forever (Exod. 29:9), but within that, if part of the priesthood showed itself to be untrue, their line would die out. This happened to Eli's part of the priestly family (I Sam. 22:11–23; I Kings. 2:26–27). As the story of Israel reveals, the Aaronic family of Zadok came to have responsibility for the priesthood (I Kings. 2:35). Survivors of Eli's family would beg for menial jobs to earn a living.

For Eli's sons not to know the Lord was an act of defiance (2:12), but young Samuel had not had the opportunity to know him. He was in the temple where the ark was kept, serving the Lord under Eli. No one there was accustomed to the Lord speaking to his people.

God began speaking to Samuel, and when Samuel realised who it was, God told him that Eli and his family would die.

Samuel soon became known as a truthful prophet. The Lord was with him and continued to speak to him and everything he prophesied happened. Though Eli had been unfaithful, he acknowledged that the word given to Samuel was the word of God. Israel could only live by every word from God's mouth (Deut. 8:3).

The lamp of God still flickering in the temple before daybreak suggests that in the prayer of Hannah and the word that came to her son, God had tended the lamps by which Israel was brought through this dark period of the judges.

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